

VZCZCXYZ0004  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #0912 0880542  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 290542Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3613  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2246  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 8407  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 7923  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2356  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J3 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OSD/ISA/EAP// PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 000912

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2017

TAGS: [KS](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#)

SUBJECT: VICTIMS' ORGANIZATION REQUESTS U.S. JOIN EFFORT TO  
EXHUME POSSIBLE NO GUN-RI REMAINS

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (U) This is an action request. See para 5.

12. (SBU) Shin Sung-won, Director of North America Division II of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) informed Embassy that the Republic of Korea (ROK) will finance a USD 200,000 task force under the Special Law to Restore the Reputation of No Gun-ri Victims. Shin explained that a villager reported the existence of a previously-unidentified burial site located at the Twin Tunnels in No Gun-ri to local authorities in January 2007. Shin said that local authorities surveyed the site and agreed to exhume the estimated 30 to 40 bodies buried there. The task force is being organized by the No Gun-ri Victims' Organization and will consist of local government, police, doctors, and forensic experts from local hospitals. The task force will exhume the remains beginning in April 2007, with an investigation and report of the findings to follow by the end of the year.

13. (C) Shin relayed the No Gun-ri's Victims' Organization's request that the USG send an expert to participate in the exhumation and investigation. The Victims' Organization also requested MOFAT participation in the task force, but Shin said that MOFAT had declined the invitation because it was a technical, rather than political, issue and that the transparency and integrity of the investigation were circumspect. He also offered candid remarks doubting the true motivation of the Victims' Organization's request for USG assistance. Shin said he was concerned that USG participation would be politicized, especially in this presidential election year, and would lend credibility to an investigation that may not warrant it. However, Shin noted that minimal U.S. involvement could be viewed as a humanitarian effort that would be welcomed by the victims' families. Shin said that should the USG decide to participate, MOFAT would also send a representative.

14. (C) Comment/Recommendation: Post recommends, and USFK concurs, that the USG decline to provide assistance to support the No Gun-ri Victims' Organization task force. No Gun-ri remains a sensitive and highly emotional topic for many Koreans. U.S. involvement will ensure increased publicity, which is the most likely reason U.S. participation

has been requested. (Note: MOFAT contacts have indicated that without USG or high-level ROKG involvement, the task force and its findings are not likely to be taken seriously.)

It will be the local Korean experts and the No Gun-ri Victims' Organization who will determine what they want the report to say. While their intentions may be noble, the participation of a U.S. technical expert would help legitimize their findings, while providing little or no opportunity to influence the outcome or ensure that the results are scientifically sound. Should USG assistance be contemplated, Post recommends it be as low key as possible, such as offering to provide the services of U.S. forensic facilities for off-site analysis of the remains. End Comment/Recommendation.

15. (SBU) Action Request: Post requests that Department advise whether the USG will send an expert to assist in the exhumation and investigation and how Post should respond to the No Gun-ri Victims' Organization's request. End Action Request.  
VERSHBOW